



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 11

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, AFGHANISTAN. JANUARY 2006

# LIGHTNING NEWS

**LAST ISSUE SPECIAL**

## FROM THE TASK FORCE COMMANDER



Well, we are coming to a close of a very long chapter in the 44th Signal Battalion's Afghanistan deployment history. Within a few days, we will see our replacements arrive across Afghanistan and begin our relief-in-place process. It is amazing what we accomplished throughout this year-long

deployment, but we should not rest on our laurels yet. We still have one more month of communications support to maintain and a safe redeployment of our Soldiers and civilians back to our home stations. While we are executing this all-important transition, I ask each of you to take pride in what and how you are doing it. Whether it be running cable to another cable vault, reconfiguring a router, creating welcome home signs or organizing the activities for another family readiness group brief, you are all doing it with such precision and professionalism, it is simply humbling.

I applaud each and every one of you for the work you performed throughout this entire deployment. Let us finish this off right and let us position ourselves to where we can look back without any regrets, concerns or setbacks. Let us all spend our extremely well deserved block leave with the ones we love so dearly and happily. When we are mission complete and successfully reunited, we can then not only look back and relish the incredible successes this battalion has so overwhelmingly enjoyed but to also thank and recognize those folks who made it so. I am honored to serve with each and every one of you and I sincerely thank you for all that you do.

May God Bless All of you!

LTC KEITH R. NICOLETTI  
LIGHTNING 6; ONE TEAM!



## FROM THE TF COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR



Hello Team, we are through the holidays with less than two months remaining. The holidays were great, thanks to the support and goodies from our FRG leaders. We are excited about leaving as we prepare to receive our replacements which starts arriving as early as next week. This deployment has been a success for the Task Force Lightning

team, but our job is not done. Remember to stay focused and vigilant in the days ahead and remember the job is not over until we return to our home station safely. The weather is starting to turn for the worse, which will impact our relief in place with 10th Mountain, but we are determined to stay optimistic.

The deployment has been a success for several reasons, primarily because we provided great communication support throughout the theater and made our presence known. We have junior Soldiers who are returning as NCOs with a different focus, and lieutenants returning as Captains who have grown as leaders. They have unique experiences which they will remember for the rest of their lives. It's hard to believe the next homecoming reception will be ours; I look forward to the reunion. After we return and reintegration is behind us, I encourage everyone to take leave and enjoy your families and friends, it is well deserved. This has been a great ride, but all good things must come to an end; thank you for your dedication and hard work; I will see you on the high ground back in Germany; God bless you and keep you always.

CSM VERNETTA M. LEWIS  
LIGHTNING 7; ONE TEAM!

## Chaplain's Corner



I hope everyone in the Task Force Lightning Family had a Merry Christmas and I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. This is one of my favorite times of the year for a couple reasons. 1st, the New Year offers each of us the opportunity to wipe the slate clean, to set aside the failures and disappointments of the past year, and to start all over again. The 2nd reason I enjoy this time of year is the NFL playoffs are in full swing. I am especially excited this year as my favorite team, the Denver Broncos, are the 2nd seed in the AFC and have an excellent shot at winning their 3rd Super Bowl Championship. Now that the New Year is here it also means that redeployment is just around the corner. Since this will be the last newsletter before the redeployment I would like to touch on a couple of items that will make your re-integration smoother.

First, as we anticipate redeployment remember that we all have fantasies about what the reunion will be like. Some of those fantasies are realistic and some are not. It is important that you begin to communicate and share with your spouse or loved ones now what you expect the reunion to be like. By clearly communicating our expectations, and asking our spouse what their expectations are, we can avoid some of the pitfalls of feeling let down because the reunion didn't go the way we would have liked. Whatever your expectations, it pays to talk about them early and often to your loved ones.

Second, as your Soldier prepares to come home realize that we all have been changed by this experience. Your reunion process actually began before the deployment occurred. We have all been preparing ourselves, good or bad, for the reunion process for quite awhile. Both Soldiers and family members have picked up all kinds of habits and behaviors during the deployment. Some of these are good and some are bad. We all have been changed by this process.

From the Soldier's perspective, there is good news about returning home. We will no longer have to walk outside to go to the bathroom or to take a shower. We will get to use real forks and spoons when we eat (no more plastics). It is amazing all the habits we have acquired and the changes in lifestyle we have had over the course of the deployment.

But the nagging question deep inside is...how will I fit in? How will I be received by friends and family back home? Maybe as a spouse you have changed your appearance in some way and you are wondering will your Soldier like the new you? What can I expect from my Soldier when they return home? How has the deployment changed them? Once again, it is important that you begin to talk now with your loved ones about how the deployment has changed you and about what your fears and anxieties surrounding the reunion are. The more you communicate now the easier the reunion process will be.

Finally, I would like to share some tips on how to make your reunion smoother. Initially, as a Soldier "Be a Guest" in your own home. Don't go home and immediately try to change routines of things that have worked for the past year and don't try to immediately take control. Take things slowly.

It is important that you communicate openly and positively about the past year. Tell your spouse about your experiences and take time to listen to theirs. Take things slowly the first several days after redeployment. Don't fill the schedule with activity and this is not necessarily a good time to have friends or family visiting in the home. Take time to rest and to become reacquainted with each other.

Soldiers, take time to commend your spouse for a job well done. Though they may not have handled things the way you would have, remember, there is more than one way to skin a cat. Our spouses have had a tremendous responsibility while we were gone keeping up our household affairs and it is important that they know we appreciate all they have done. Remember, the keys to a successful redeployment are: Communication, Patience and Understanding. Never forget that a kind word turns away wrath, and a little patience and understanding can avoid a lot of pain and distress. As Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

God Bless,  
CH (MAJ) Rabe

## Editor's Note

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all Americans, who supported us throughout this deployment. We have received hundreds of letters and packages, which made us feel a little closer to home and made this deployment a successful one!

I also extend my gratitude to all the Soldiers who contributed to this publication by writing articles and/or taking photos. Your contributions made this deployment easier to endure by our Family members back home. Thank you!

A big 'thanks' goes out to Task Force Lightning Command Team for presenting me with the opportunity to produce this publication, and to document our deployment as a photographer.

Last but not least, to my friends Pappy, Chase, and Lil' Mac – thank you so much for keeping me sane during this deployment. I am honored to have served with you!

Scouts Out!  
Cpl. Serge "BATMAN" Batyrshin

**LIGHTNING NEWS is a monthly authorized publication of Task Force Lightning, Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.**

**Commander: LTC Keith R. Nicoletti  
Command Sergeant Major: Vernetta M. Lewis  
Editor: CPL Serge "Batman" Batyrshin**

**Photographers: CPL Serge Batyrshin  
SPC Cody McCartney  
SPC Timothy Beckwith**

**Questions or submissions may be directed to  
[agent.slim@gmail.com](mailto:agent.slim@gmail.com)**

**[www.44sigbn.hqusareur.army.mil](http://www.44sigbn.hqusareur.army.mil)  
Click on TF Lightning**

**Cover: Afghanistan map,  
Task Force Lightning logo.**



TFL OEF6 DOUBLE SET DVD will be available after block leave and will feature photos from our deployment as well as a TFL OEF6 VIDEO.





# The Hawk's View

HHC, Task Force Lightning, CJTF-76  
*"Voice of the Lion"*



## "ONE TEAM!!!"

"Accept the challenges so you may feel the exhilaration of victory."  
George S. Patton



"The exhilaration of victory!" With redeployment so near, the Hawks are already feeling a sense of Victory. They have all stepped up to the plate and tackled the challenges of this operation, accepted the mission requirements, and sacrifices they had to make in order to make this mission a complete success, and we are almost to the finish line. I am so proud to have been their

Commander over this year as they have all given so much; much more than I had ever imagined. From the best communications and technical support to logistics and administrative support to the entire Task Force, RC Commanders, and the CJTF-76 Commanding General, all the Hawks have left their mark of professionalism and the best the Army has to offer. We have completed over a dozen Humanitarian Assistance missions providing the added care and support to the local Afghan population; we have supported the historic Parliamentary Election and quickly responded to the Commanding General's call for communications support in Pakistan after the devastating earthquake. When Karshi Khanabad Airfield (K2) had to close down and the infrastructure was being removed, the Hawks flew into Uzbekistan to ensure the best communications were available. When MG Kamiya initiated the Information Operations Campaign, the Hawks quickly received, trained, and put into operation the AM & FM Radio systems. Hawks received over 60 joint service Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Navy



personnel. Trained them on the traffic terminals and Radio Operations, in order to move them out to the many communications packages throughout the CJOA.

As you can see, the Hawks have been heavily engaged over the last year, but I have to say, we have had our share of fun as well with many BBQs, sports activities, MWR functions & VIPs who have come to meet with the "Mighty Hawks".



Just in December, the WWE came to visit us here in TF Lightning along with some Dallas Cheerleaders, musicians, some actors, and comedians. The Vice President and Secretary of Defense also stopped by during the holiday season to thank the Troops personally. All Hawks continue to have a high morale and continue to watch each others' back.

Yes, "Victory" is at hand and the Soldiers and Civilians of HHC, Task Force Lightning should feel the exhilaration, but none of this would be possible without the relentless support of our Family members back in the rear and Stateside. You all continue to energize the Hawks with your endless supply of correspondence, care packages, and prayers. Believe me when I say, "It has been well-received and we are a better fighting force because of it." Thanks for everything.

Well, as you all know the Holiday season has passed and the Hawks celebrated it as well as we could here in the desert. We all joined together prior to Christmas and had a BBQ consisting of a huge spread of steaks, shrimp, salads, and enough cookies and other sweets to feed everyone on BAF (all because of the 25+ boxes of treats sent to us over the last 2 months from friends and family in the FRG and other organizations back in the States.) Everyone received gifts through our Secret Santa game and the get-together culminated with a singing of the "Twelve Days of Christmas"

by 12 divided groups and conducted by CSM Lewis. On Christmas Day, the Hawk leadership served food at the DFAC once again after having so much fun doing it during Thanksgiving. The Troops of BAF were happy to see the smiling face of the Hawks serving them the delicious spread and wishing them a Merry Christmas and all the Best in the New Year.



December was the last month of R&R with all Soldiers wanting to go during the deployment having the opportunity. We will continue with passes to Qatar until the beginning of January and provide limited local passes to those soldiers who had not been deployed long enough for the R&R leave.

With 10<sup>th</sup> MTN arriving in January, the Hawks are leaning forward in the foxhole and preparing for the transfer of authority. I foresee some busy days ahead to ensure the smoothest transition with our replacements. All the Hawks will continue to be safe and we are all agreed that we need to watch each other during these final days in OEF VI. I promise all of you that all attempts will be made to ensure the best Victory of all, the 100% reunion of all Hawks with their family members. Please continue your correspondence with your loved ones here in theater. If you haven't done so already, please prepare for your reunion. The FRG and the Command here in theater all can assist in these preparations. Other Agencies on your post like the Chaplain, ACS, and other families with experience in these matters can assist, as well. As we get closer to the redeployment date, we will make all attempts to ensure you are notified of the return of the Hawks.

Thanks Everyone for your Support

HAWK 6 & HAWK 7

"THE HAWKS VIEW" HHC, TASK FORCE LIGHTNING - DECEMBER 2005







# ALPHA



# GATORS



Here we are again Gators, taking a look back at another month, which means we are that much closer to shutting the door on this deployment. With that said, we are not home yet. We must remain focused on our mission to ensure that we all return safely to our families and friends. Gators listen to me; games are won and lost in the 4th quarter. We are deep into the 4th quarter. We've had a very successful year and in some instances been extremely fortunate, but until the clock reads 0:00 and we step onto solid ground back in Mannheim, we must and will continue to lean forward in the foxhole, doing the things that have brought us this far. Noncommissioned Officers, our Soldiers need your leadership and guidance now more than ever. Soldiers will follow wherever we lead. It is our responsibility as Noncommissioned Officers to ensure that we are leading in the right direction.

I had the opportunity to visit SSG Munoz and SPC Ross at FOB Blessing this month. They, along with a small group from the 82nd, are the only Soldiers on site with the 2/3 Marines. Aside from wanting to test "The Old Man" by hiking up a hill to an ANA Observation Post, they, like all of our Soldiers, are doing a tremendous job providing communications for the warfighters. Our Soldiers out at the Traffic Terminal sites absolutely amaze me. We crammed very little training at you prior to deployment and said, Go make it happen. You not only have done this, but have far surpassed any expectations that we may have had. Thank you for your professionalism and lowering your standards for no one.

Additionally, we had a few of our Gators return home to Mannheim as part of phase two re-deployment. They have conducted their seven-day reintegration, and are currently on or preparing to enjoy some well-deserved block leave. Stay focused - our time is coming. Just think, if we weren't here we couldn't have enjoyed Christmas together. I know what you're thinking - no really I do, but just know this - if we can't be with our immediate families, there is absolutely no place on the earth that I would rather be than with our Gator family. I look forward to the day all our Gators are all back in the same grid square.



CPT McElwain and I are proud as hell to serve with you and thank each and every one of you for making our Company the tight knit family that it is. Gators 4 Life.

Run-in-Place.....We'll break down on the other side.

*ISG Penton and CPT McElwain*

In the past month, SGT Dearing made the 32nd Gator to reenlist since arriving in theater. Thank you for "Staying Army". We appreciate all the sacrifices that you and your families make in order to serve our country.

Congratulations to SFC (P) Taylor for his selection to Master Sergeant and SSG Orr, SGT Pearson, Y., SGT Jasso, and SGT White for their recent promotions.



## BRAVO DAWGS



As we approach the final months of our deployment be sure to take the opportunity to reflect on your experience. All Dawgs, regardless of their location or mission, contributed to the success that this company has achieved. The loyalty that you have had for the company, but more importantly for each other, is what has kept us together as a company across Afghanistan's Provinces and dozens of FOBs. The relationships and memories forged here will not be easily forgotten. The legacy of the American Soldier will endure as well for the people of Afghanistan. Remember those that have gone before us and breached the lines of the enemy and those that will follow us and reap the benefits of your hard work. Also, remember those friends and fellow Soldiers that will not return home to their families.

Carry on with the peace of mind that we came here as a company and accomplished our tasks to the best of our ability.

*CPT Stephen T Wellein*



Photos courtesy of B Co. More photos from Bravo Company will be available on TFL OEF6 DOUBLE SET DVD.





# YEAR IN REVIEW

## LIGHTNING NEWS



# TASK FORCE LIGHTNING, OEF6, AFGHANISTAN 2005-2006





**TASK FORCE LIGHTNING**







# YEAR IN REVIEW

## LIGHTNING NEWS



# TASK FORCE LIGHTNING





# SAFETY FIRST

January 2006



Greetings Leaders, Soldiers, and Civilians of **TF LIGHTNING**.

This will be the final Safety Gram in our TF Lightning Newsletter. From a **SAFETY** standpoint, I would to thank everyone for all your tremendous work so far. We can see the finish line from where we are now. Although we have had only a few mishaps, no one has been seriously injured and no equipment has been lost due to negligence or carelessness. I do not need to tell you that the cold is upon us. The Cold can be a killer both directly and indirectly.

Leaders, conduct refresher training on cold weather related risks. Everyone, keep vigilant watch over each other and use common sense!

Just as important as using proper cold weather gear, everyone must hydrate. Cold weather makes us tend to avoid drinking liquids which can lead to severe dehydration. Ensure that operators of pot belly and arctic stoves are licensed and that a fire watch is always used. Ensure proper ventilation because carbon monoxide is a silent killer.

Our replacements will be here in a matter of days. As you transition out, **SAFETY** should not become less of a priority; rather it should remain the **number one priority at all times**.

A **CRITICAL AND CRUCIAL** part of the RIP/TOA process is to conduct it in the most safe and efficient manner at all times. This is true not only for better posturing our replacements but for all of us that are redeploying as well. Now is the time for all of us maintain our safety focus as stridently as we have over the past year. We are too close to going home for any of us to suffer the consequences of complacency and carelessness in our routine and mission performances.

My **SAFETY** guidance to everyone during the RIP/TOA process is to pass on to your replacements the **SAFETY** mindset and emphasize the importance of integrating **SAFETY** in **EVERY** aspect of the deployment.

Leaders: I hold you responsible with the overall well being of all personnel.

Everyone: I implore you – **DO THE RIGHT THING! ALWAYS!**

**We are only SAFE when Standards Are Fully Enforced!!!**

**TASK FORCE LIGHTNING – ONE TEAM!!!**

**KEITH R. NICOLETTI**  
**LTC, SC**  
**Commanding**